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*Hudson, Massachusetts*  
**CENTER REVITALIZATION PROJECT**



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FALL, 1981



# table of contents

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	ABSTRACT	1
II	PURPOSE	1
III	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
IV	CREDITS	2
V	INTRODUCTION	
	A. History	4
	B. The Image of Hudson	5
	C. Image Characteristics	6
VI	EXISTING CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
	A. Land Use	9
	B. Paths	
	. Main Street	12
	. Alleys	14
	. Parking-Lot Sidewalks	14
	. River Walkway	14
	. Pedestrian Mall	14
	C. Nodes	
	. Pedestrian Mall	16
	. Small Sitting Areas	18
	D. Edges	
	. The Assabet River	19
	. Open Space	19
	E. Districts	
	. Storefronts	21
	. Signs	21
	F. Landmarks	
	. Landmarks in Hudson	26
VII	CONCLUSIONS	
	A. Conclusions	28



# abstract

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The Hudson Center Urban-Design Analysis Technical Memorandum has been prepared by the staff of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the Boston area's official regional-planning agency, made up of chief elected officials from 101 greater-Boston cities and towns, 11 state- or Boston-agency representatives, and 21 gubernatorial appointees to represent minority and consumer interests. MAPC works with communities on problems important to the region, such as housing, land use, transportation, economic development, water quality, energy conservation, hazardous materials, air quality, and solid waste.

In 1979 Hudson was chosen by MAPC to receive technical assistance for the economic, social, and physical revitalization of the town center, a decision based on need, community interest, and local support.

The Council worked closely with concerned members of the community and the Hudson Center Front Door Committee, a task force comprising businesses, property owners, and local government. The task force worked with MAPC staff to analyze existing conditions, offer solutions to problems, and discuss political and social implications of the proposed plan. Comments and many suggestions came from business and shopper surveys, public meetings, and individual citizens. In the end, the committee took the responsibility of deciding on a final plan, which was passed at the June of 1981 Town Meeting.

## purpose

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This report documents the decisions made by the Hudson Front Door Committee and MAPC staff for the Hudson Center Revitalization Project.

This document is intended to serve as a future planning and design resource for revitalization in Hudson Center. It can also be an aid in obtaining the appropriate funding and support for the implementation of the proposed plan.

# acknowledgements

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introduction

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# history

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Named after the Honorable Charles Hudson, benefactor of the first public library in Hudson, the town was founded on March 16, 1866, by taking parts of Marlborough and Bolton. An economically stable industrial community, Hudson found its main prosperity in shoemaking. Noted for the number and high quality of its shoe industries, Hudson was even visited by the Japanese Embassy in 1872 under the guidance of the Boston Shoe Leather Exchange.

On July 4, 1894, however, disaster struck. A fire was started by small boys playing with firecrackers in the rear of a shoe factory. Most local firemen, like everyone else, were at Riverside Park for holiday fireworks, so the response to alarms for the spreading fire was delayed. Although much assistance was offered by citizens of neighboring towns, the progress of the fire was halted only by winds and a shower, which drove the flames back over the already burnt center of town. In three hours nearly 40 buildings, covering five acres, were destroyed, representing a loss of \$500,000. But the enspirited townspeople immediately began to restore the business section. The Graves block was first to be completed for occupancy, its first store appropriately named the Phoenix. The Lawrence building was completed by December 15, and the others continued to be erected at an industrious pace. Today, approximately 14 brick and granite buildings stand where the fire was.

Hudson Present



Hudson Past



## the image of hudson

Downtown Hudson has many charming qualities. Its nearness to a large residential community is a great benefit both to merchants and to citizens. The attitudes of the community, as demonstrated by their civic pride, and those of the merchants, as shown in their eagerness to improve the quality of the town center, are most encouraging. The beauty of the natural resources, such as the Assabet River, Bruce Pond, and the surrounding hills, is an asset unknown to many towns. And some of the architecture in town is exemplary, too. The older buildings in town, especially those along Main Street, are quite lovely, displaying a craftsmanship and historical integrity also unavailable to many towns.

Hudson does have problems within the town itself, however, which discourage more active use by the surrounding community and public. Traffic and parking are paramount problems in most people's minds. These important matters are described in detail in the Hudson Proposed Traffic & Parking Improvements.

From a design viewpoint, furthermore, problems exist. Main Street looks generally run-down, and the stylistically inconsistent renovations and inappropriately placed storefront facades, signs, and awnings give the town overall a somewhat cluttered appearance. The lack of trees and pedestrian furniture also gives Main Street an uncomfortable feel, less-inviting than a treelined avenue with areas for sitting. The sidewalks are cracked, worn, and need repaving, then maintenance, and pedestrian access to parking lots is limited.

The backs of stores, especially on the south side of Main Street, have been neglected. The wires overhead are an unsightly jumble. The general image makes the parking area on South Street uninviting, and the lack of sitting and congregating areas results in an unpleasing environment for the pedestrian--hardly conducive to window shopping or impulse buying.

Another major problem in Hudson is that the town's greatest assets, its natural resources, are underused. Both the Assabet River and Bruce Pond are inaccessible to the very young, the elderly, and the handicapped, and both are unappealing to those averse to spending time in potentially unsafe areas. Paths leading to the river are undefined, rough footpaths. Weeds and litter mar the beauty of the water's edge. There's no place for sitting. The area currently is used for congregating, but only by those who arrive on motor- or bicycle and are willing to sit on the ground. Much recreational potential is lost by the neglect of the river's edge.



Assabet River



## image characteristics

Main Street



The image of a town comes, of course, from its appearance — shapes, predominant colors, the textures created by the materials of the buildings, pavement, and landscaping (and subsequent maintenance). Hudson's image will be discussed in five categories: paths, nodes, edges, districts, and landmarks.

Paths are circulation routes, the directions people move, the sidewalks, alleys, and shortcuts. Of all these elements, paths provide the most order, so each should be well-defined.

Nodes are centers of activity one can enter, intersections of paths or points of pedestrian concentration, e.g., plazas and sitting areas.

Edges, obviously, are linear boundaries distinguishing one area from another. A row of buildings, an elevated roadway, or a river are common examples of strongly defined edges.

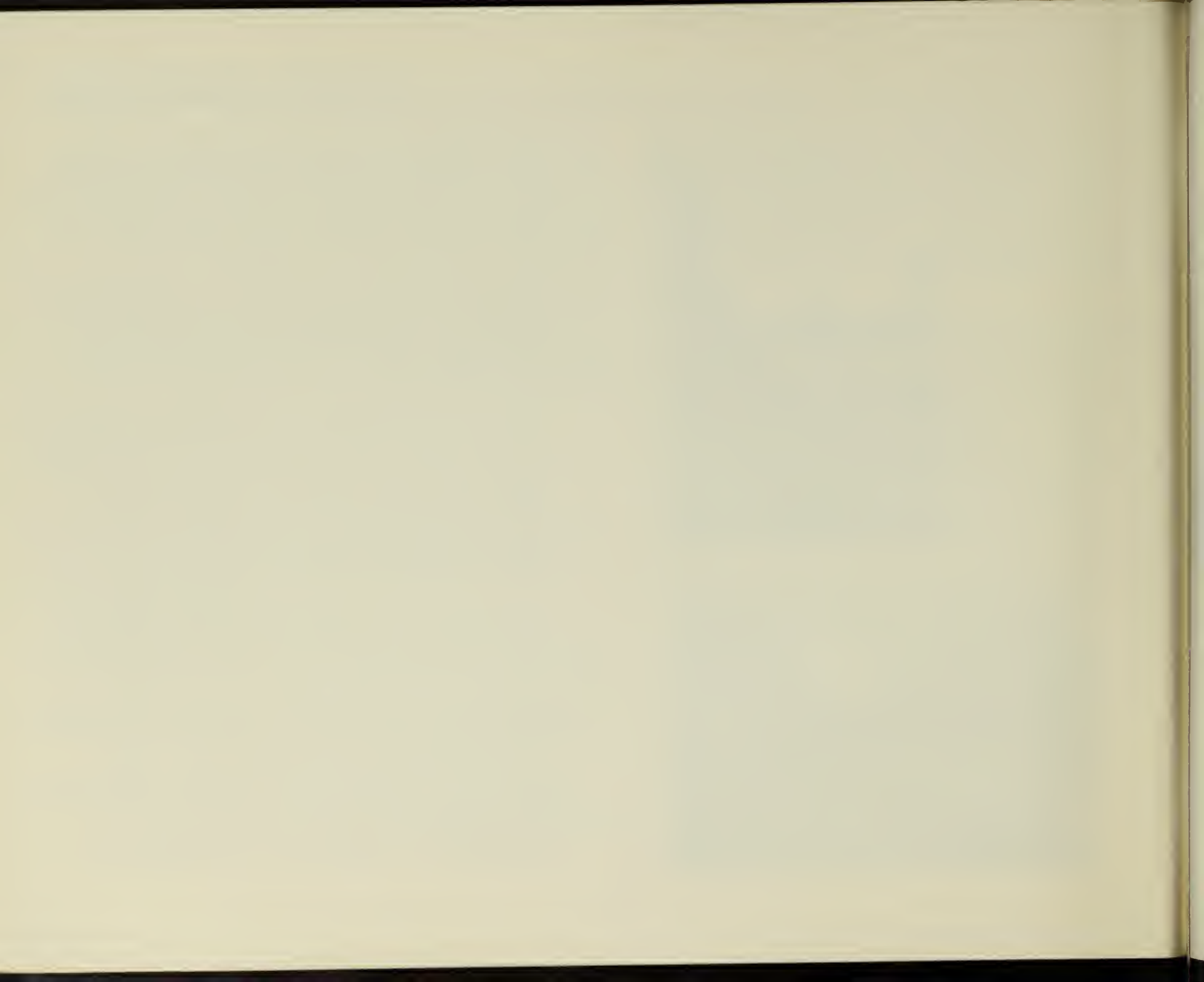
Districts, medium to large portions of a town, are distinguished by shared characteristics, such as types of people, architecture, retail uses, etc.

Landmarks are those buildings, towers, mountains, domes, etc. that aid in identifying an area.

The image of Hudson's town center can be readily improved with the coordinated effort of officials, merchants, and citizens. Following is an analysis of existing conditions and recommendations for the paths, nodes, edges, districts, and landmarks of the downtown.

South Street





existing conditions  
and  
recommendations

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## land use

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Following are brief descriptions of major and minor changes in land use proposed for Hudson Center. The deciding reasons and description of site development have been discussed in detail in other sections of this report.

Most of the land abutting the north and south sides of Main Street is currently being used for commercial operations. The Market-Analysis Report makes recommendations for the use of retail space, but generally the businesses in Hudson are stable and the use of land along Main Street is productive.

Two long-term land-use recommendations for Main Street have been made. First: the portion of land in front of the existing printing business should be considered for in-fill commercial development. (This is not to say that the present printing business should move.) Second: the parcel of land adjacent to Tannery Brook, on which a gas station currently is situated, should at some time be subdivided into two uses — a small food store with parking in the rear and a small sitting area next to the brook. Both suggested uses would benefit from the high visibility and convenient location of this parcel.

The majority of land behind Main Street abutting South Street is either vacant or for parking. Major land-use recommendations have been made for this area.

The parcel of land between Market Street and the present South Street extension, now occupied by a house, would be used for parking under the proposed plan. The recommended development of Elm Garage into a retail/restaurant complex warrants this additional parking space; further existing Main Street businesses would benefit from additional convenient short-term parking.

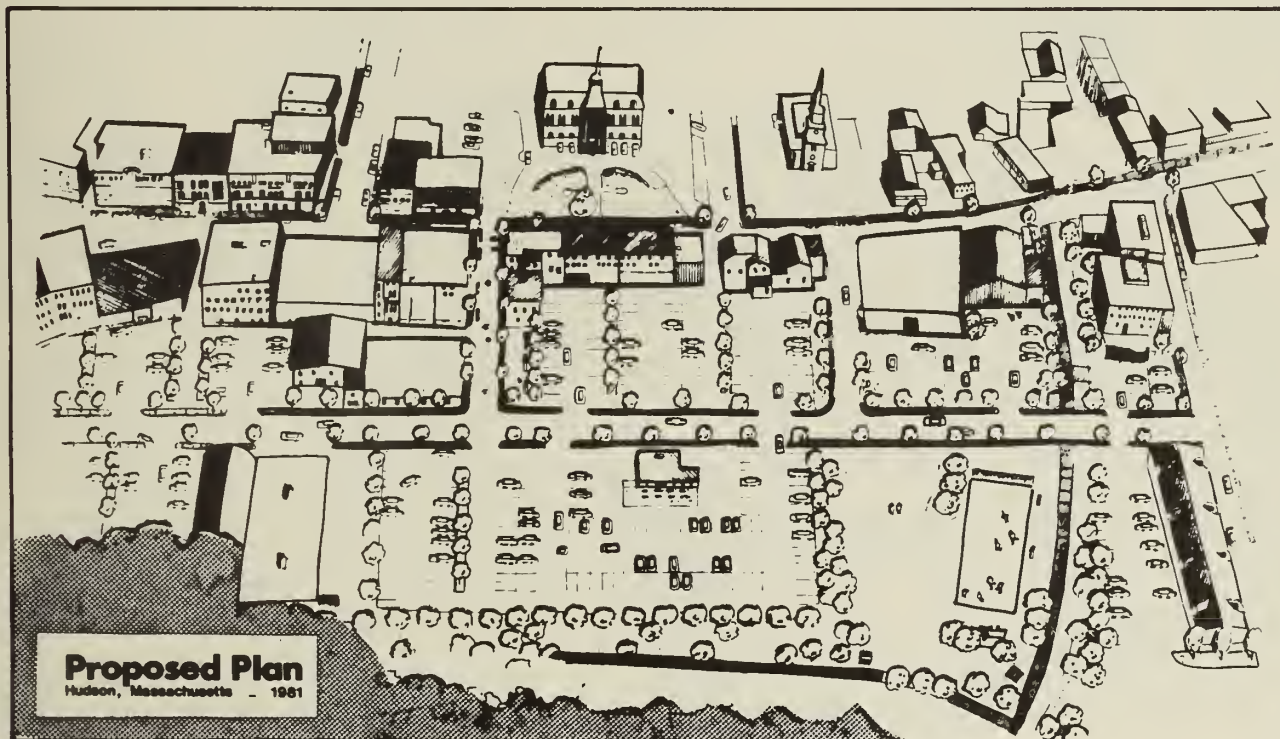
Another area to be designated for parking is the land behind the Aubuchon hardware store and the proposed food store. With the proposed extension of South Street to Houghton Street, this site is well-suited for development, and convenient parking should be available.

A large expanse of land along the north side of the Assabet River should be a major concern. The proposed plan recommends declaring the tract conservation land, to be used for limited recreation. An open space adjacent to the proposed conservation land should be developed and used for special events and active recreation. The importance of this proposed plan is discussed in detail in the open-space section.

Another land-use recommendation involves the conversion of the existing and little-used municipal parking lot off Houghton Street. The plan suggests that this land could be used more productively as prime office/commercial space. Any such develop-

ment should, of course, include landscaping of the canal and river bank, to preserve the appeal of the proposed park and conservation land.

The last recommendation concerns the conversion of Market Street from a vehicular road to a pedestrian mall, an essential step for the revitalization of the downtown center.





# CENTER REVITALIZATION PROJECT

## TRAFFIC

To reduce traffic congestion and accident potential in downtown Hudson, many traffic problems and solutions were studied by MAARC traffic engineers and the Joint Door Committee. The following recommendations were made:

- Implement a one-way traffic-circulation system downtown. Main Street should become one-way westbound from Houghton Street to the rotary and South Street should extend to Houghton Street and become one-way eastbound from Washington Street.
- Redesign the existing South Street extension to become one-way southbound from Main Street.
- Retain most on-street parking on Main Street.
- Replace the Wood Square Rotary with a channelized intersection with traffic signals.
- Close Market Street to vehicles, creating a pedestrian mall.
- Improve traffic signal operation at Broad, Manning, and Main Streets and restrict parking at the corners.
- Install new traffic signals at South and Main, Pope and Main, and at River, Lincoln and Central Streets.

## URBAN DESIGN

## MAIN STREET

## MARKET STREET MALL

- Close Market Street to vehicular traffic and develop an outdoor pedestrian mall.
- Plant large shade trees in the street and small flowering trees in the proposed sitting area adjacent.
- Place benches in both the street and the proposed sitting area, with additional tables and chairs provided in the outdoor dining/playing area.
- Place movable planters in the proposed siting/playing area to define the different areas. The permanent planter should contain evergreens for year-round screening, and the planter's edge should be lined with potted flowers.
- Place accent lighting on Market Street and the proposed pedestrian mall.
- Hang colorful, festive banners across Market Street.
- Site an informational kiosk near the sitting area.
- Provide visual continuity along Main Street by planting trees, installing benches, restoring the sidewalks, and putting up awnings and new signs on buildings. Consistent materials, patterns, and colors are recommended.
- Improve signage on Main Street buildings by putting up signs in scale and character with the architecture of the specific building and adjacent buildings. A sensitive sign ordinance should be adopted by the town for future use.
- Restore or replace facades that need repair or are out of character with the style of the building.
- Use materials in the streetscape and storefront renovations appropriate to the historical context of the center's architecture. Nominate the area for inclusion on the National Historic Register. Consider placing historical markers where appropriate.
- Improve pedestrian connections from Main Street to the parking lots through alleys. Provide lighting, benches, and landscaping.

## OPEN SPACE

Design the and along the Assabet River corridor and to be used for limited passive recreation. Benches, lighting, and a waterway would be required. Develop the area adjacent to the proposed conservator and into a park. An amphitheater, walking trail, landscaping, benches and lighting are recommended. Encourage events that are open to the town's open space, e.g., festivals, outdoor markets, etc.

## PARKING

Half of all shoppers and businessmen surveyed felt that inadequate parking was a major problem in Hudson. In studies conducted by MAARC traffic engineers, however, it was found that actually there was more than enough parking in certain areas. The real problems were the unavailability of short-term parking spaces for evening pedestrian access to existing parking lots and conveniently located lots. The following was recommended: Redesign existing parking lots on South Street, no on-street parking, improve traffic circulation, and provide safe, attractive ways for pedestrians. Landscaping the proposed parking in the lots with small flowering trees for shade, color, and interest. Develop a parking lot on the existing residential parcel between Market and South Street, accommodating customers by the proposed 100 garage complex and existing businesses. Use all or part of the right side of South Street to provide under two-hour parking. Business employees and overnight customers should be encouraged to use the municipal lot on the south side of South Street.

# HUDSON

Plan Prepared by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Prepared by Hudson Area and Hudson River Door Committee  
1981  
Scale 1" = 100'

# paths

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## Main Street

Not meaning to sound obvious, it should be pointed out that downtowns are for people. Pleasant, accessible streets, sidewalks, and sitting areas are needed to make a downtown work well. People must have safe, convenient access from their cars to shopping areas and from one shopping area to another. Walkways that are attractive and wide enough to accommodate pedestrians and planted trees, that contain benches for sitting, and that provide signs and awnings on a human scale are important. A good pathway system also makes a town feel more comfortable.

The main pedestrian-circulation pattern in Hudson is along Main Street. The electrical lines there have been placed underground, freeing the skyline of overhead wires and the sidewalks of poles. The rise of the road and its gentle curves are visually pleasing to both motorist and pedestrian. They open new views and prevent a monotonous, flat drive.

However, the view down Main Street still needs much improvement. The consistent building setback and the density of development make the scene somewhat linear and hard-edged. Trees are needed to soften this appearance and provide shade, color, and textural interest. New awnings could also help produce this. The existing ones on Hudson buildings are either poorly maintained or unused.

Other pedestrian amenities conspicuously lacking from sidewalks are benches and trash containers. Both are important, for pedestrian comfort and to keep the streets clean.

Existing alleys, currently used by pedestrians to get to parking lots, also need improvement. They are roughly paved, unattractive, and dark. Plants, benches, and lighting would help.

Lack of furniture





## Recommendations

### Main Street

Main Street, because of traffic requirements, can't be widened, so alterations in the form of neck-downs or bubbles (extensions of sidewalk width into the parking lane) must be made for trees and benches. Neck-downs also shorten the distance for crossing the street, increasing safety. They usually are placed at intersections or key crosswalks. Intersections normally do not allow parking, so any sidewalk-width extensions will not take away valuable on-street parking. Neck-downs are also proposed to accent a pedestrian entrance into an alley, announce an entrance into the mall, or simply maintain continuity of street-tree plantings. Neck-downs provide for pedestrians a feeling of expanse and, with trees, benches, and safer crosswalks, of comfort.

Planting trees along Main Street will greatly improve its appearance. Care should be taken to ensure that the chosen tree types meet certain criteria. The most important consideration is hardiness, since trees naturally are affected by soil condition, weather, temperature, pavement heat, and rainfall. Trees for Main Street also should be tall and wide enough for shade, although the limited sidewalk width precludes trees of great spread. Columnar trees branching high enough for cars and benches would be best. When considering maintenance, remember that some trees shed leaves, flowers, or fruit more frequently and in more abundance than others. Some need spraying for insects, some have thorns, and some smell bad in flower. Naturally, researching these matters is very important, and the services of a landscape architect are probably advisable.



## Alleys

Several alleys in Hudson enable pedestrian access from Main Street to parking areas. The alley between The Camera Store and The Dress Shop and the alley between the Army-Navy Store and the cleaners, both on the south side of Main Street, lead to major parking areas in Hudson. They also will be direct links from Main Street to the proposed recreation area behind South Street. Both alleys are wide enough to handle ample pedestrian traffic, and should be improved with small flowering trees or shrubs to soften the "corridor" effect. Night lighting is also recommended. Pavement similar to that of sidewalks will be used to mark the alley as a passageway. When designing such an alleyway, caution should be exercised, to protect the sides of the buildings. Their surfaces should not be marred, windows should not be covered, and fire escapes or utility connections should not be made inconvenient. It is important that any repair work, painting, or cleaning done to enhance the alley maintains the integrity of the building.

The creation of attractive pedestrian-access alleys will help connect Main Street to the parking areas and the proposed recreation/conservation land, making pedestrian-circulation patterns more defined and accessible.

### Parking-Lot Sidewalks

The walkways proposed for the various redesigned or proposed parking lots will be conveniently and safely placed to take people from their cars to connecting alleys or sidewalks. Most of the proposed walks are in front of the parking lanes, between the cars and planters. The walkways are to be shaded with small flowering trees in concrete planters, and of course will be better



Landscaped Alley

than walking in the lot itself. The walkways should be of the same material and pattern as the Main Street walks, ensuring visual continuity through the downtown business district of Hudson.

### River Walkway

Discussed also in Open Space section is a pedestrian/bicycle pathway along the north side of the Assabet River and the west side of Tannery Brook, connecting with Main Street. This walkway gives people a direct route to the proposed recreational resources of the town. They would be drawn by the "visual link" from Main Street. The walkway should be not only attractive but durable and wide enough for heavy use. Attractive landscaping is essential to screen unattractive views of the parking areas. Bicycle racks should be provided.

### The Pedestrian Mall

A major pedestrian path, the proposed mall will be discussed in the next section.



**MARKET STREET MALL**  
perspective of sitting area  
hudson, ma



# nodes

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## Pedestrian Mall

There are many reasons for building a full mall. "Full" describes a pedestrian mall obtained by closing off a street. The street is redone with new paving, trees, benches, lighting, and other amenities (e.g., a kiosk, banners, and sculpture). A mall typically provides a stable environment for retail business, encourages private investment, competes better with suburban shopping centers, and ultimately revitalizes a downtown by increasing retail sales and property values. A mall used as a social center for exhibits, concerts, flower shows, parades, arts and crafts festivals, etc. becomes interesting for more people. It also shows off the care and cooperation of city officials and local merchants.

The closing of Market Street is one of the most important recommendations in the revitalization plan. Market Street, at present one-way, is to be closed to vehicular traffic. Emergency and delivery vehicles will be allowed. The street will be repaved and adorned with trees, benches, and decorative lighting. A mall will thus be created. Colorful flags could hang overhead. Vendors should be issued licenses to set up pushcart concessions, giving a festive character to the area.

The Elm Garage, an attractive building now used for storage, would be converted into commercial use under MAPC's proposed plan. The market analysis found that the town of Hudson could support a good-quality full-

menu restaurant. The renovated Elm Garage would be perfect for such a place. Parking is readily available, and the accessible location and possible views of the river and proposed conservation land are additional attractive features. The building could also contain miscellaneous retail shops, such as women's shops, an ice-cream store, boutiques, etc. The conversion of Market Street into a pedestrian mall would attract many shoppers into the restaurant and the shops.

The pedestrian-sitting area off to the side of Market Street acts as an extension of the mall. The area is bordered on its north side by an attractive two-story brick building, on its south side by South Street, on its east side by Market Street, and on its west side by the parking lot. The area will have an enclosed feeling, being screened from the parking lot and South Street by a 30-inch-high linear concrete planter filled with evergreens. The main view will be of activity on Market Street.

The area should be divided for its various uses. Market Street per se is mostly for strolling pedestrians. The sitting area of course is for those wanting to rest a while. The recommended plan separates the large 80 ft. x 30 ft. sitting area into one area for outside dining and drinking and one for sitting and socializing.

The outside dining and drinking area would be furnished with tables, chairs, and umbrellas. Evergreens in the planters enclose the area and potted flowers on the planter wall will offer color and fragrance. Large, portable, planted shrubs can be moved around the area to define intimate spaces. The proposed restaurant in the Elm Garage or other shops could serve the area with take-out orders. It is imperative that some establishment or groups of establishments be responsible for maintaining the area, e.g., taking the umbrellas and chairs in at night.

Separated from the dining area by a rope, the sitting area would be more flexible. Individual chairs would be furnished for people to arrange as they wished. A large sculptural kiosk can be a focal point for the area. It would be used by merchants and civic groups to announce special events, sales, etc. Such a central information center would be beneficial to all.

It should be noted that the closing of Market Street for a pedestrian mall can be successful only if the Elm Garage contains mixed retail uses that draw a cross-section of people into the area.

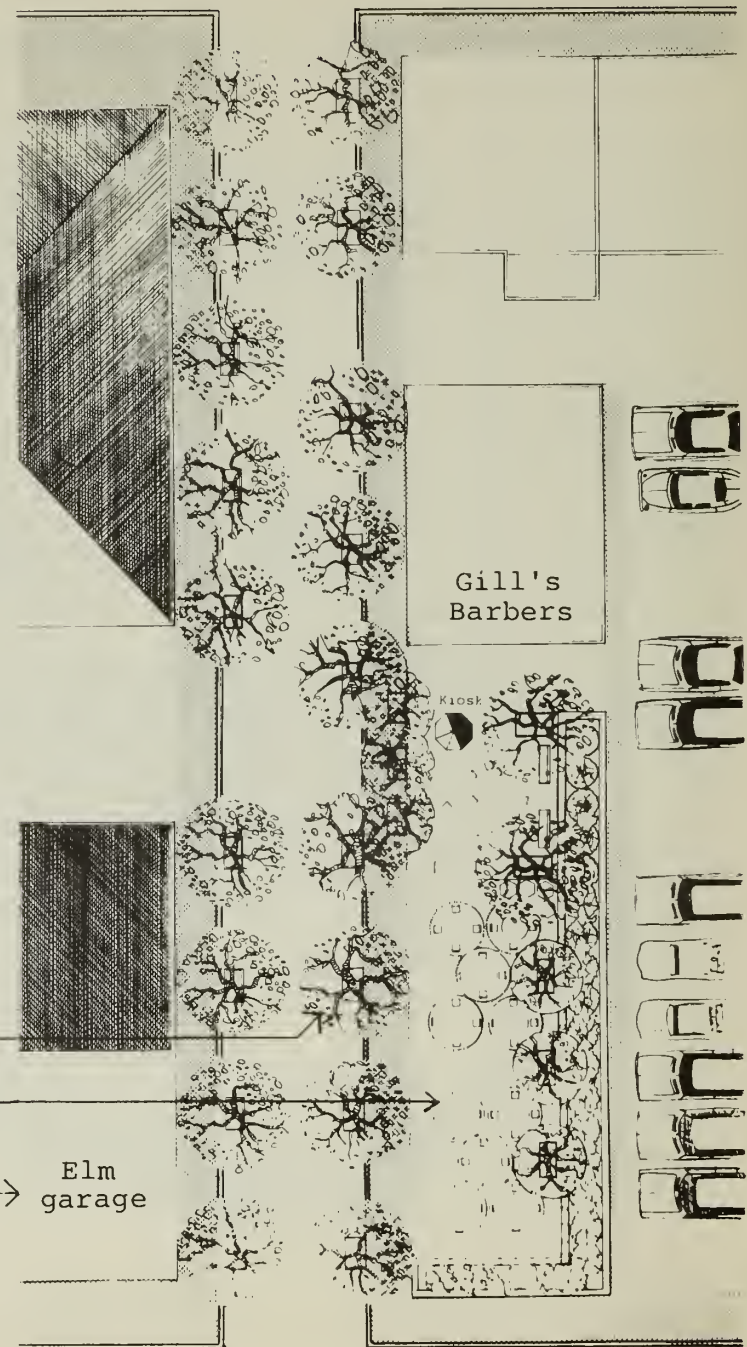
Landscape Market Street

Provide dining/sitting area

Renovate Elm Garage  
for commercial use

→ Elm  
garage

## Plan View of Proposed Mall



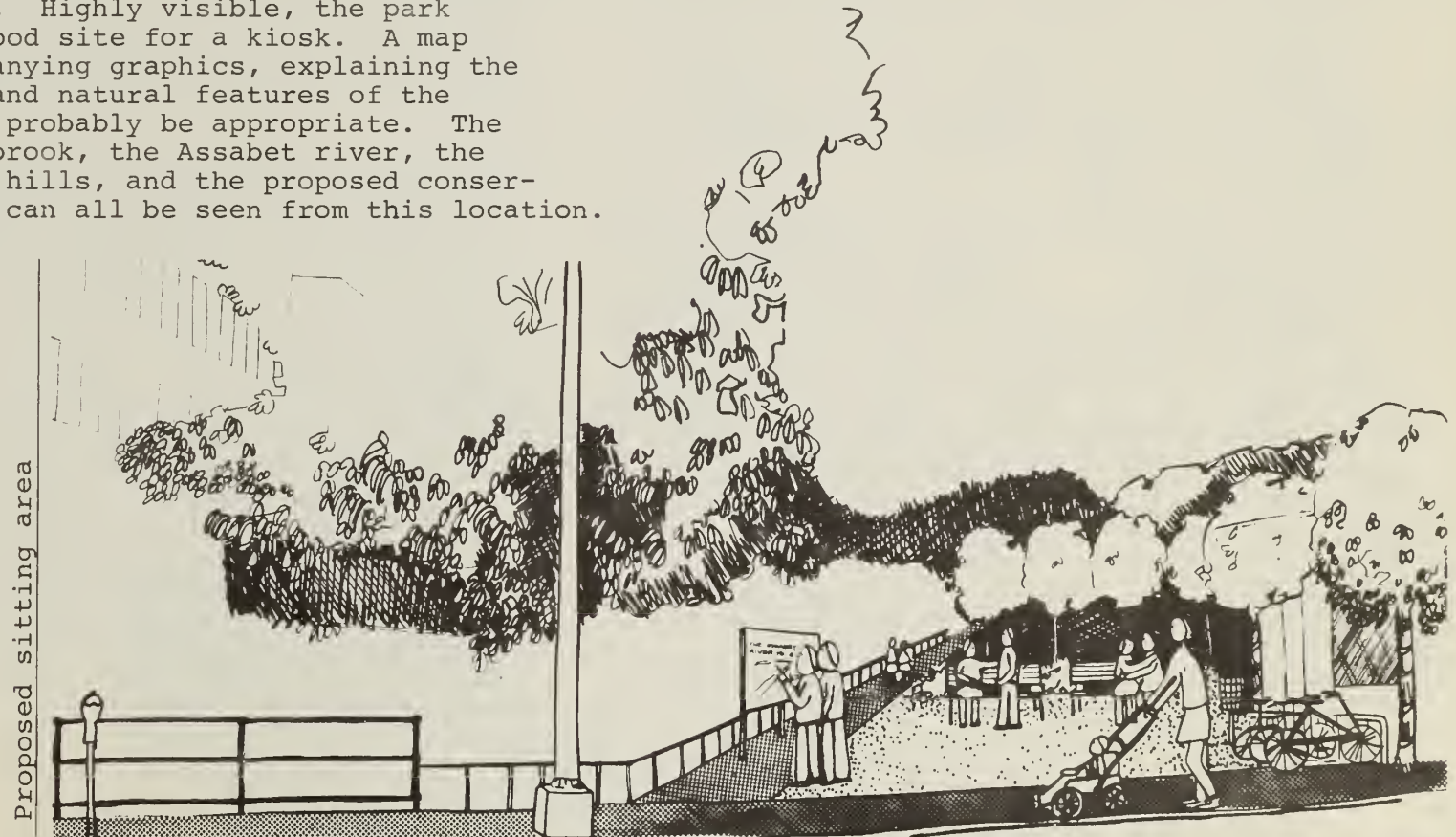


## SMALL SITTING AREAS

Two small pedestrian-sitting areas have been recommended for the downtown. The first, on Main Street at the beginning of the brook and proposed walkway, is approximately 50 ft. x 30 ft. Midway between the east and west ends of Main Street, this area offers respite for those traveling from one end of town to the other. It also acts as an entrance and gathering area for those using the walkway. Large shade trees, small flowering shrubs, and flowering annuals should be planted in the area for shade and visual interest. Benches, trash receptacles, and night lighting should also be provided. Highly visible, the park will be a good site for a kiosk. A map with accompanying graphics, explaining the historical and natural features of the town, would probably be appropriate. The Bruce Pond brook, the Assabet river, the surrounding hills, and the proposed conservation land can all be seen from this location.

The sitting area would be adjacent to a proposed grocery store. Use of the park should not disrupt local business activities, or vice versa. Directly off Main Street, adjacent to a brook where people now congregate, the sitting area is a prime location for extensive use.

The other proposed sitting area would be off the Market Street pedestrian mall. The virtues of this area have already been discussed, in conjunction with the Mall.



# edges

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## THE ASSABET RIVER

Naturally, the most apparent defining boundary in downtown Hudson is the Assabet River. Separating the business district from the residential community on the south side of town, the river serves as an edge. The river also marks the west side of the center, as the business district ends where the river curves round the bend. A glance at the map will clarify this.

Along the business (north) side of the river there is considerable open space. A large parking area has been built on much of the land, and remaining is a no-man's land, physically and visually wasted. The area is not maintained and displays no purpose. The open space should take advantage of its defining properties and serve a positive function.

## OPEN SPACE

Open space can have an important role in a downtown, providing relief from urban congestion and room for recreation and relaxation. Such space is that expanse of land which is "open"--free to be entered and used in an unstructured way. A well-designed, well-maintained park that is both inviting and readily accessible offers opportunities for social contact, solitude, and relaxation. It can become a place to rest during a shopping trip, a place to talk with friends or meet new people. Closeness with nature is possible. A well-designed and -maintained open park is, above all, an opportunity to lend a feeling of place and identity to the surrounding community.

In 1976 the Universal Engineering Corporation, in Boston, conducted a municipal recreation-and-open-space study for the town of Hudson. The study was to establish a logical and economic approach to serving the existing and projected population's recreational needs while conserving natural resources of the town, and it was to be used with state and federal grant programs. According to it, Hudson lacked open space, given the needs of the current population. And based upon the Recreation Advisory Board's "Five-Year Recreation Plan," Hudson was approximately 50 percent below 1972 national standards for recreation land.

Conserving land in the downtown area for open space and limited recreation serves many functions. It keeps important resources, the river and surroundings, from future development. Open space helps define urban areas and itself provides a significant passive outdoor recreation area. This stimulates good use of leisure time in the downtown center for a cross-section of residents. The handicapped, elderly, adolescents, and those less-mobile downtown residents will be able to have access to such a town-maintained park. Its nearness to the shopping district has reciprocal benefits: the park provides a relaxing area for shoppers and those using it can also shop. It would be nice for Hudson to bring itself up to standard, meeting its open-space and recreation responsibilities.

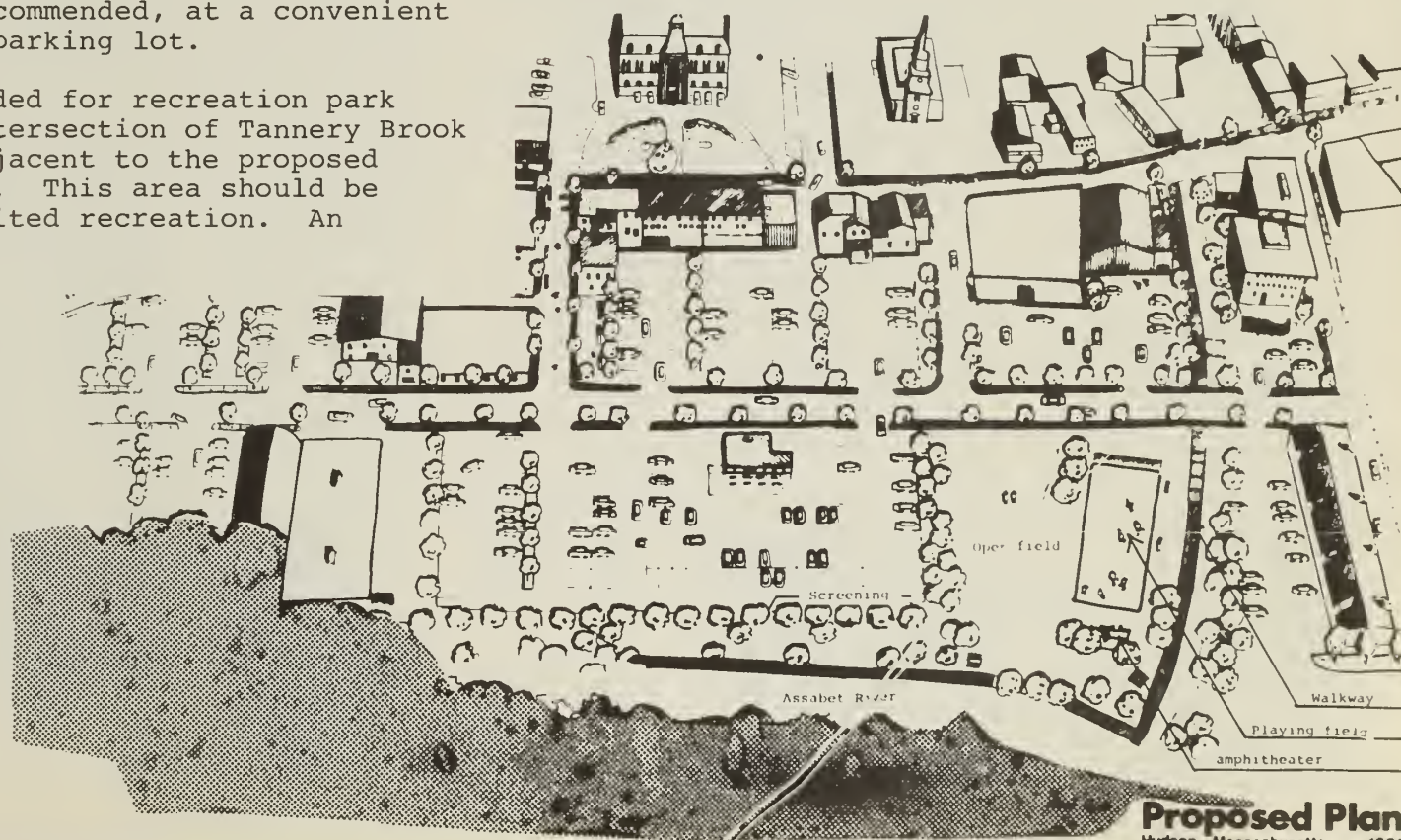


## Recommendations

The site recommended for conservation land is between the South Street parking lots and the river. The land needs protection from further parking encroachment or building. The Assabet River is one of the town's significant resources and should be made available in its natural state to people. A walkway along the river would provide a scenic route from the river to Main Street for pedestrians and bicyclists. Benches should be installed, and trees could be strategically placed for interest and screening of the parking lot. A canoe launch is also recommended, at a convenient location off the parking lot.

The site recommended for recreation park land is at the intersection of Tannery Brook and the river, adjacent to the proposed conservation land. This area should be developed for limited recreation. An

outdoor amphitheater would be nice for civic uses, Summer music, drama, dance, and miscellaneous activities would then be possible near the town's business center. A field, slightly recessed, could be flooded in the winter for skating. Additional outdoor lighting, especially along the walkway and playing field, should be considered. Lighting lengthens the time the park can be used, of course, and discourages vandalism and accents areas. Planting for attractiveness and parking-lot screening is also encouraged.



# districts

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## STOREFRONTS

The business district of Hudson Center basically is the retail buildings on the north and south side of Main Street. A few retail establishments lie on side streets, but the main impression of Hudson's business district is of a strip along Main Street.

The turn of the century left some beautiful buildings in Hudson Center -- of stone, brick, or granite, tastefully designed, well-built, sensibly sited. These buildings give a feeling of tradition and beauty to the business district. They have a level of craftsmanship and feeling of permanence often absent from modern structures. These buildings are focal points and give the town a very strong, long-term asset. Their preservation is crucial.

The Georgian Revival building (now containing Wheeler Pharmacy), the Federal Revival "Prescott" building (now containing Gail's), the Romanesque Revival "Wood" building (now containing Crest), the Victorian "Holden" building (now containing Bacon's Spirits) and the Romanesque Revival "Savings Bank" building (now containing the bank) are a few examples of the richness of styles on just one town block. These buildings all were built in the decade following the fire of 1894, and all used good-quality materials and remain in good condition. Town Hall, the Renaissance Revival "Lawrence" building, the Panel Brick Victorian Commercial building, and the Queen Anne Commercial building are other examples of significant

architecture in the town. However, neglect in painting, cleaning, repointing, and general repair mean that some look shabby. Extraneous hardware not removed from facades and signs covering beautiful details are detractions.

## SIGNS

Signs contribute greatly to the character of a business district, significantly enhancing or detracting from the area's appearance. Signs seen from outside a building are designed to tell the public about the premises and interests of private or public firms, persons, or organizations. They attract the attention of pedestrians and motorists, provide directions or information, communicate ownership, and announce services and products. They create images for both the building and the center. The style and design of signs can convey an elegant or modest image, a conservative or progressive one. Signs may be painted on, incorporated into, or affixed to a wall, flush or perpendicular. The sign may be freestanding, on an awning or canopy, placed on the inside of a display window, or hanging like a flag. They come in many forms, colors, materials, and styles. Complementary signs, coordinated through the business district, can unify the streetscape, enhancing the image of the town and stimulating business.



## Recommendation

It is important that vigorous renovation begin. Many buildings, especially those surrounding Wood Square, need only minor alterations. Newly designed signs and awnings and general maintenance are all that is necessary. Other buildings, however, call for more extensive renovation. The facades have been badly neglected or covered with unflattering materials. A glance will identify these buildings. Architectural features should never be covered by false fronts strictly for expediency and low cost. If a detail or facade is in such poor condition that it must be removed or covered, the materials and detailing of the new construction should, in material, color, texture and appearance, be as sympathetic to the original building as possible.

The key to successful renovation is being ever attentive to the original design of the building. A good design will always have a proportionally pleasing relationship between doors, windows, and details and the basic structure of the facade. The original dimensions should be maintained on the renovated storefront, determining the size and location of the sign, window openings, doors, and details. A professional architect or designer should be consulted for specific buildings.

Neat, attractive signs and clean storefronts give the building and the business within an organized, prospering image--one that attracts customers. Uncluttered, well-thought-out modern window displays exhibiting attractive merchandise are also an incentive for customers. A handsome downtown center, strongly defined by the character of the buildings, is essential for a thriving business atmosphere.



REMOVE EXISTING SIGN TO EXPOSE FULL STONE FACADE. COORDINATE STYLE AND COLORS FOR THREE STORES

COORDINATE COLORS OF AWNINGS ALONG STREET

ELIMINATE EXISTING SIGN TO EXPOSE ARCHED WINDOWS

ARRANGE ATTRACTIVE WINDOW DISPLAYS TO ADVERTISE GOODS

FURNISH AWNING WITH STORES NAME ON FRONT FLAT

PROVIDE LETTERING ON SIGNS TO ADVERTISE THE UPPER STORY SHOPS

CONSOLIDATE EXISTING SIGNS AND PROVIDE COORDINATE AWNINGS

Proposed renovations

Present-day Hudson



Serious attention should be given to the design of individual signs in Hudson and the coordination of signs throughout the town. Not all signs should be the same, for variety adds interest, but signs ought to be considerate of the existing architecture, their supporting structure, and of neighboring buildings and signs. Several stores, especially those in the same building, can use similar colors, materials, or designs to provide a consistent image or theme. Well-designed, well-placed signs on individual buildings throughout the town would greatly improve the look of Main Street. The beautiful older buildings in Hudson deserve good-looking signs, not ones that cover up architectural details, use cheap, garish materials, or crassly compete for attention. Cooperation among merchants displays a spirit of compatibility within the business community, a benefit for all.

Sign-design guidelines for the bylaws should be reviewed and, once endorsed, enforced. Non-conforming signs should be given a deadline for changing. Better signs in Hudson will be an immediately discernible and relatively inexpensive measure for improving Main Street.

EXISTING BUILDING IS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND IS IN GOOD CONDITION

OVERSIZED PLASTIC SIGN DOES NOT RELATE TO THE ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY OF THE BUILDING

PROJECTING SIGN CREATES CONTINUITY OF BUILDING FACADE

EXISTING SIGN OBSCURED THE ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS OF THE BUILDING (AS THE ARCHITECTED DOORWAY)



PROVIDE ATTRACTIVE WINDOW DISPLAYS

PROVIDE AWNING WITH STORE NAME ON FRONT PAINT EXPOSED WINDOWS ABOVE EXPOSED FALSE CEILING LINE

EXP. DOORWAY ARCH PREVIOUSLY HIDDEN BY SIGN





When considering sign characteristics, scale, color, material, and compatibility should be paramount.

Scale: The size of the sign should fit the storefront. Many buildings establish their sign area as within the design of their facade. Undecorated lintels (horizontal stones above windows and doors) often suggest placement and size for signs, as on the Atlanta building. Bays of the facade may establish the maximum width of the sign. A sign should be large enough to be easily read by a pedestrian or motorist but not so large as to cover architectural details on a building, e.g., the way the old Boston Furniture sign does.

Word size should be between  $\frac{1}{3}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  the height of the sign area, with letters subordinate to background. The number of words should always be the least necessary, as simple designs are most readily comprehended. While choosing the style of design and the typeface, one should always consider the building on which the sign will be portrayed and the image one would like. Gothic and Roman (serif) typefaces are usually more elegant; contemporary typefaces (sans serif) are more modern. An example of congruence between building and sign is Murphy's Insurance.

Materials: One should use the best affordable. A sign is a long-term investment, and good materials ensure durability, less maintenance, and long-term aesthetic benefits. Like a typeface, material

conveys an image. Wood can be curved, laminated, painted, clear-finished, or weathered. It offers a variety of grains and textures. Metal, for its part, can be etched, cut, cast, embossed, wrought, rolled, or extruded. A range of coatings, finishes, and color is available, or a sign can be kept simply reflective. Metal needs minimum maintenance if the finish stays intact.

Cloth, glass, stone, and brick have their own distinct qualities. Lettering on glass (a storefront window) is inexpensive and is usually effective if the lettering is at eye level and occupies no more than 25 percent of the total glass area.

Lettering on Glass



Plastic signs usually are screen-printed or vacuum-formed panels in a metal frame, or molded letters applied to the surface. Variety of shape, color, texture, and opacity is the attribute of plastic. Concealed or internal lighting is possible but should be used with discretion.

Colors: The colors of a sign or awning should be compatible with those of the building and neighboring signs and awnings. Varying hues and intensities of the same color can provide a consistent image or theme on a building or streetscape. Co-ordinated signs or awnings can unify a block of otherwise mismatched buildings.

When choosing colors, their effects should be considered: bright ones often create excitement, quiet ones suggest dignity or repose. The contrast between lettering and background colors is important too: dark lettering on a light background or vice versa is the most legible, but too much (like too little) contrast causes eye strain. Hudson's older buildings deserve signs that are compatible with the historic architecture. Subdued colors would work best.



Neon Window Sign



Carved Wooden Sign



Free-standing Sign

# landmarks

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## Landmarks in Hudson

Landmarks are physical objects that, by definition, easily mark a locality. They vary in size and may be visible from a distance or up close, from many directions or only one. Whatever their size or aspect, landmarks always provide a sense of place.

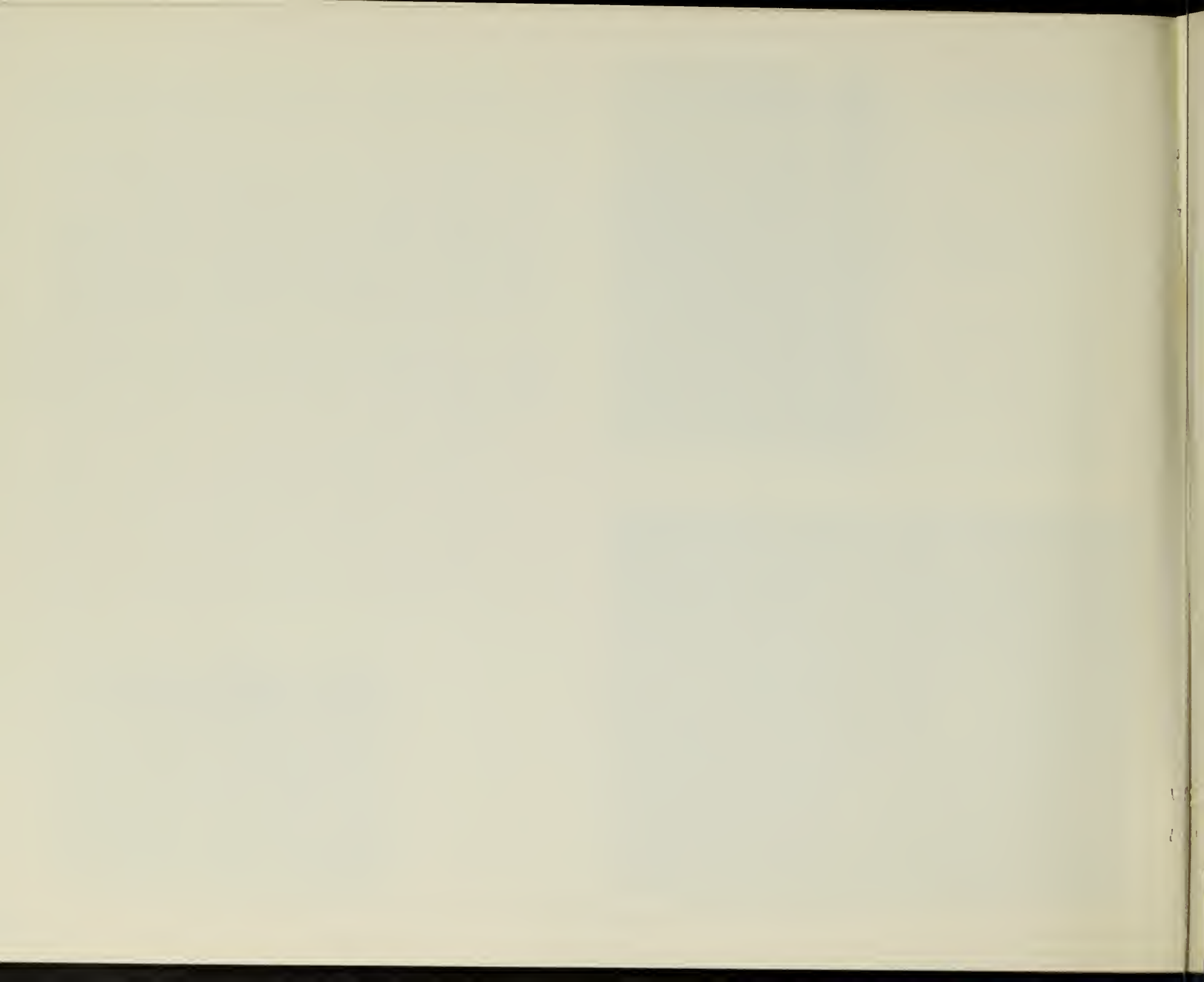
## Recommendations

The design of the proposed intersection eliminates the rotary. This is necessary for improved traffic flow. An expanded sidewalk area with flowering trees and benches on the south side of Main Street will become the new focal point at the intersection.

Other landmarks in the town are prominent buildings like Town Hall, pieces of sculpture like the civic monuments in the park, or natural features, like Main Street crossing over Tannery Brook. All of these should be maintained. The 60-foot brick smokestack behind South Street, next to the parking lot, is a rather obscure landmark. Remaining from a destroyed industrial building, the chimney is destined to be razed. It is a safety hazard, and it has been decided that repair work would be too costly.

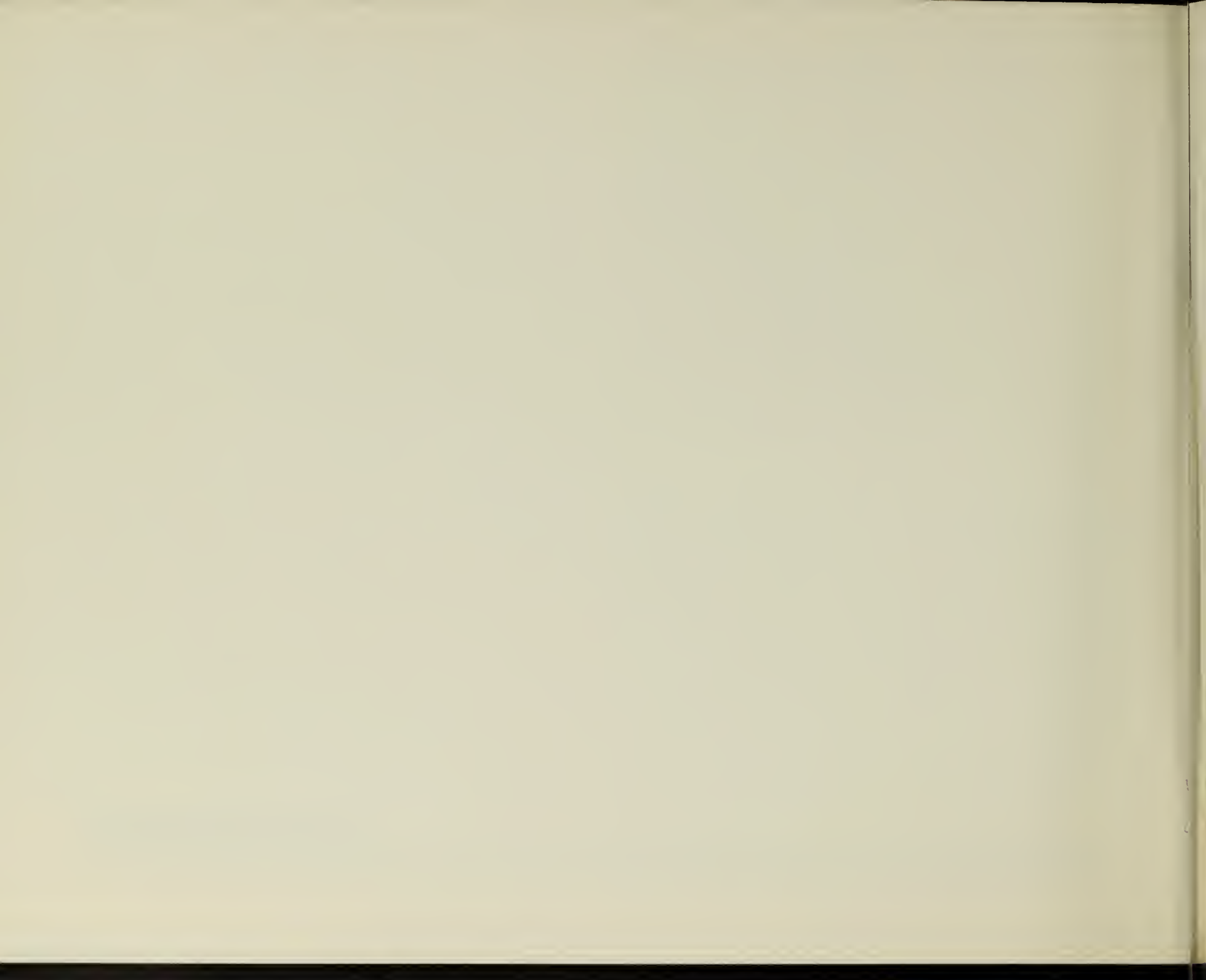
A large-scale area that will be perceived as a distinguishing landmark is the proposed pedestrian mall. By itself it will be visually prominent, different from the rest of the business district. As the center of pedestrian activity, the mall will draw attention to itself. And within it, lesser landmarks will come into being.

The park land, with the proposed amphitheater and pedestrian amenities, also will come to be viewed as a landmark bordering the business district.





conclusions



## Conclusions

The success of this revitalization plan is contingent upon alleviating the town's traffic and parking problems, encouraging a productive market expansion in the center, and improving the look of the town.

Traffic and parking problems and recommendations are addressed in detail in Hudson Proposed Traffic and Parking Improvements. Highlights of the report recommend implementing one-way circulation system downtown, making Main Street westbound and South Street eastbound. The Wood Square Rotary should be replaced with a normal intersection and traffic signals. Through traffic should be diverted from the downtown area to two bypass routes. South Street should be extended to Houghton Street, and Market Street should be closed to vehicles. Signals are also needed at key intersections to reduce traffic congestion.

Parking recommendations include redesigning existing lots on South Street to increase efficiency and provide landscaping. Long-term parkers should be encouraged to use the municipal lot, freeing the closer South Street spaces for short-term parking. The Houghton Street lot, little-used for parking, should be developed into office or commercial use. The lot across from Elm Garage on Market at South Streets is recommended only if the retail establishments placed in the Garage

generate the need for additional spaces (e.g., a restaurant generates a great need for spaces, a clothing store much less). It is recommended that most parking on Main Street be retained, only those spaces removed that are needed for intersection redesign or landscaping.

Market growth in the town is predicated on an increased selection of convenience goods, rather than on such "large-ticket" items as furniture and clothing. It was found that a restaurant and small food store could be economically supported by the town. Further, a diverse mix of retail uses will encourage more visits to Hudson and increase retail growth in Hudson as a whole.

A major recommendation concerning both marketing and urban design concerns the reuse of Elm Garage. It is recommended that the building be converted into a mix of retail uses that would attract different ages and types of people into the downtown. A restaurant is highly recommended, and stores catering to a diverse population would be beneficial to the entire area. It is recommended that a pedestrian mall with an outdoor sitting/dining area be constructed on the closed Market Street--but only if the uses in the Elm Garage accommodate children, teenagers, the middle-aged, and the elderly. The vitality of such a mixed population must be present for the mall to be successful.

Stores on South Street should clean up their rear "facades" and signs, opening up back entrances where possible. All buildings in town should consider maintenance, for many facades need repair or replacement.

Building signs on Main Street are in need of improvements, and coordination with neighbors is essential.

Main Street should be landscaped with trees, benches, and new paving, to provide pedestrian amenities and produce visual continuity down the street. The historical nature of the center's architecture should always be considered in making design changes. (The downtown area also should be nominated as a National Register Historic District.)

The land along the Assabet should be declared conservation land, to be used for limited passive recreation. The land adjacent to that should be developed into an open park. These recommendations are equally important to the revitalization.

Indeed, these traffic, parking, marketing, and urban-design recommendations all depend on one another. Any change will obviously affect the others, so careful consideration is necessary in implementing any one part of the center-revitalization project.





